

## SIGNIFICANT STRIDES HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE EDUCATION FRONT



“What was saddening at the time was that those who were in the bus were in most instances travelling shorter distances than those who were walking barefooted, hungry and at times in unfavourable weather conditions”.



The assertion that until lions write their story, their history will always be told by the hunters propelled me to put pen to paper in the quest of narrating the gains made in the education sector.

What came to mind as a point of departure was a realisation that not so long ago some of us experienced a half empty bus (written school bus) with only white learners driving past a host of black learners walking barefooted to school.



No more walking to schools

Learners whose families live below the bread-line are assured that they will upon arrival at school receive a nutritious meal that is enough to ensure that they concentrate to the teaching and learning of the day without having to endure the burden of the cramps and growls of an empty stomach.

Mpumalanga province has 835 444 learners who are beneficiaries of the National School Nutrition Programme. Some of these learners hate it when schools have to close, for they feel that the closure robs them of that special nutritious meal a day.

In those days some learners used to learn under trees, mud or makeshift structures that would at no stage resemble a centre of community development.

Today as one walks or drives around the province one marvels at the beauty of school infrastructure that the current Government is building. The state of the art schools are built with science laboratories, kitchens, libraries and computer centres.

Tears roll down my face each time I recall reading an article of a learner from Kamhlushwa Secondary School in the Nkomazi Local Municipality who had to be counselled for her to use the state of the art ablution facility which according to her resembled a kitchen.

“Those days some learners used to learn under trees, mud or makeshift structures that would at no stage resemble a centre of community development.”

Today the province takes pride in that it has eradicated mud schools and that there is no learner learning under trees.

Computers are no longer just a luxury that our children only marvels on television screens but something that most learners touch and live in everyday. In this regard we thank the benevolence of the business sector for their support and for providing these resources.

Four boarding schools are going to be operational next year to cater for children who are currently in multi grade schools, orphans and those who are required to walk long distances to schools. These are at Nkomazi, Mkhondo and Emakhazeni local municipalities with two already functional.



Mgwenyane Computer Centre

We are mindful that there are a few school structures that still require urgent attention but that should not suggest that nothing significant has been done.

The department has this year committed **R620 million** to improve school infrastructure.

These are but a few tales that we for one reason or the other tend to overlook or undermine.

We also acknowledge that these days the majority of parents are no longer expected to worry about school fees as 85% of our public schools in

Mpumalanga are no fee schools. At these schools learners receive stationery, textbooks, food and scholar transport and are exposed on daily basis to competent teachers.

Boys and girls of late master mathematics and physical science something the prophets of doom and the likes of Dr Hendrik Verwoerd suggested that it is not meant for a black child.

Following the 2012 grade 12 results, there were four learners from KwaNdebele Science School who obtained 100% pass in Mathematics meaning 300 out of 300. We take pride of the likes of Solomon Moabi from Libangeni in the Dr JS Local Municipality who was the overall best learner in the country from quintile one schools. He is living proof that it is possible to obtain outstanding performance irrespective of the circumstances one finds himself in.

We remember Bonginkosi Mnisi from Makhosana Manzini who in 2010 obtained 100% in Physical Science and is currently studying Astrophysics, the study of stars and galaxies at the university of Cape Town.



Bonginkosi Mnisi scored 100% in Physical Science

**“He is living proof that it is possible to obtain outstanding performance irrespective of the circumstances one finds himself in.”**

The department has established a Maths, Science and Technology Academy that will ensure that the majority of our children master mathematics and science. This academy will be fully functional in 2014 and will connect to 100 schools throughout the province to improve on the teaching and learning of Maths, Science and Technology.

The province also boasts the Ligbron e-learning project which uses 21st century technology to help under privileged schools to uplift their standard of teaching and learning. The six participating schools in this project are Camden combined, Umzimvelo Agriculture School, Ermelo Combined, Ithafa Secondary, Masizakhe Secondary and the leading school, Ligbron Academy of Technology. The use of technology in this project has nullified distance and socio-economic status of the schools involved.

Ligbron Academy of Technology is a multi cultural school since 1993 and is one of the leading schools in South Africa when it comes to the use of educational technology in the classroom.



In appreciation of the Ligbron Project

In 2003, the grade 12 results were standing at 58.2% and today we pride ourselves with the 71.9% obtained in 2012. Surely such a quantum leap of progress warrants acknowledgement. We will not rest until the province obtains 100% and we request our communities to support the department to achieve this goal.

“She was totally illiterate until the age of fifty-nine (59). It is at this age that she took a decision to turn her life around by registering at Kwaguqa learning centre in the year 2011 for basic reading, writing and numeric skills and from there, she never looked back.”

Government has started to pay special attention to improving the foundation phase through progressive programmes such as the Annual National Assessment and Early Childhood Development and already we see positive results.

Let us not forget that these positive developments carry the hopes and actual lives of the people of our country and province. They are human stories of triumph just like the story of Mrs Anna Msimang (60), who was declared the overall best Adult Learner in the country at a national awards ceremony that took place on Friday, 06 September 2013 in Boksburg, Gauteng Province.

Anna Msimang is a physically challenged adult learner, a widow and a grandmother of four, who did

not let her condition become a barrier to education.

She was totally illiterate until the age of fifty-nine (59). It is at this age that she took a decision to turn her life around by registering at Kwaguqa learning centre in the year 2011 for basic reading, writing and numeric skills and from there, she never looked back. She is presently doing ABET level 2. Her triumph against all odds is an inspiration to all of us. The department has also for the past three years obtained unqualified audit reports from the Office of the Auditor-General which is also a sign of good financial management and governance.

These are but a few strides that have been recorded over the last few years and represents our tale that in most time we tend to think the writing on the wall yet it is not.

This is our tale a true representation of our story which we should not be shy in conveying. We are however not blind to the fact that a lot still need to be done but there are a lot of strides recorded to date.





Shongwe Boarding School, Nkomazi Municipality